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**‘A Muse / To grace the Page of weekly News’:**

**Mary Leapor and the Periodical Press**

Jennifer Batt

**ABSTRACT:** Magazine verse has long been a maligned poetic category and yet, in the eighteenth century, as the magazine vogue began to take off, these periodicals hosted a rich and vibrant poetic culture. This article reveals the richness of the poetic culture made possible by magazines by exploring how it was experienced by one provincial, labouring class, female reader: Mary Leapor. The article traces a broad range of Leapor’s experiences as a reader of and contributor to periodicals including the essay paper *The Guardian*, the ground-breaking regional magazine *The Northampton Miscellany*, the nationally distributed *London Magazine*, and the literary periodical *The Museum*. As well as offering a defence of the category of magazine verse, this exploration of Leapor’s engagement with poetry in periodicals sheds light on her poetic development and poetic practice providing insight into the literary atmosphere of the household in which she grew up, and into her early literary education; revealing the influence that obscure and anonymous magazine verse exerted on her own writing; illuminating the opportunities that magazines presented both for shaping a particular kind of published persona and for developing a sense of literary community; and exposing Leapor’s attitudes – and particularly her anxieties – about publishing her verse in periodicals.

Published in early 1747, *Proposals for Printing by Subscription the Poetical Works, Serious and Humorous, of Mrs. Leapor, Lately Deceased* introduced the poet to the book-buying public in terms that were designed to appeal to ‘the tenderest Concern of every Reader who has a Heart capable of being either melted with Compassion, or warmed with Admiration’:

[She] had no other Education than in common with those of her own Station; could borrow no Helps from the Converse of her own Country Companions; yet, by the Strength of her own Parts, the Vivacity of her own Genius, and a perpetual Pursuit after Knowledge, not only acquired a Taste for the most exalted and refined Authors in our Language, but aspired to imitate ’em.

This narrative of exceptionalism was successful in its immediate aim – attracting ‘almost 600 subscribers’ for the first volume of Mary Leapor’s poetry – but it also had a longer term impact.<sup>1</sup> Repeated in the prefatory matter of both volumes of *Poems on Several Occasions* (1748, 1751), this narrative has shaped how many readers – both in the eighteenth century and more recently – have approached Leapor’s writing in two, overlapping, ways. Firstly, responses to Leapor’s writing have frequently shared the *Proposals*’ preoccupation with the Northamptonshire servant maid’s apparent geographical and cultural isolation: in recent years, for example, she has been characterized by Richard Greene as an inhabitant of an ‘isolated world’; by Valerie Rumbold as ‘alienated’; by Susan Goulding as an ‘outsider’; and by Anne Milne as a ‘misfit’.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, taking their cue from the *Proposals*’ suggestion that what set Leapor apart from her peers was her ‘Taste for the most exalted and refined Authors in our Language’, critics have focused on Leapor’s engagement with canonical writers, exploring the ways in which she sought to transcend her apparent isolation by becoming, through reading and writing, part of a community of poets. Leapor’s own small, personal library contained, according to the testimony of her friend and patron Bridget Freemantle, ‘about sixteen or seventeen single Volumes, among which were Part of Mr. Pope’s Works, Dryden’s Fables, some Volumes of Plays & c’; additionally, while Leapor was in domestic service at Weston Hall, her employer Susanna Jennens seems to have allowed her access to

the library there.<sup>3</sup> Following Betty Rizzo's memorable proposition that Leapor's poetry displays 'an anxiety *for* influence', Donna Landry, Claudia Thomas, Caryn Chaden, Margaret Anne Doody and Anne Chandler, among others, have unpacked the ways in which Leapor imitates, contends with, and subverts the work of writers including Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift and John Dryden.<sup>4</sup> Leapor was, as Richard Greene has demonstrated, also familiar with some of the works of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid in translation as well as with a selection of English classics including Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Congreve, Butler, and Gay.<sup>5</sup> As Leapor honed her craft as a poet she took lessons from the examples offered to her by these – and other – writers.

This essay, too, is interested in the influences that shaped Mary Leapor's practice as a writer, but it looks for those influences in texts that are – unlike the works of 'the most exalted and refined Authors in our Language' – unfamiliar to modern readers. Kathryn King has shown how odd, contingent, and unpredictable Leapor's engagement with literary texts could be by identifying one such surprising influence: manuscripts written 'more than half a century earlier' by an 'obscure Northamptonshire clergyman', John Newton.<sup>6</sup> Literary manuscripts were an occasional, if not a common, feature of the textual world Leapor inhabited. This essay focuses on a different kind of textual object that would have had a much more significant presence in her cultural landscape: periodicals. Leapor had access – albeit in ways that were sometimes odd, contingent, and unpredictable – to a wide-ranging and far-reaching poetic culture that existed in the pages of newspapers and magazines. As this essay demonstrates, these periodicals offered Leapor the chance to overcome whatever cultural or geographical isolation she may have felt by connecting her to an intellectual community of readers, writers, printers and publishers spread across the country.

Periodical verse has long been viewed dismissively by critics, if its cultural presence has been acknowledged at all; as Linda K. Hughes has noted, 'magazine verse ... has become

a signifier of trite or sentimental ‘filler’ worth no one’s time’.<sup>7</sup> Yet in the mid eighteenth century periodicals brought poetry of all sorts – ranging from riddles to odes, epigrams to essays, poems that have become canonical to verse that was never again reprinted – to a diverse and sizeable readership. That readership included many for whom access to verse was otherwise relatively limited. While some readers of newspapers and magazines would have given scant regard to the poetical pieces they encountered, to others that verse mattered deeply. Magazines encouraged a diversely constituted audience to participate in a print-based poetic culture by welcoming – sometimes, actively soliciting – contributions. Though the response to such appeals varied in quality and quantity, magazines offered amateur authors the chance to see their work in print, to feel part of a geographically dispersed but like-minded intellectual community, and to develop a public reputation as a writer. Newspapers and magazines connected readers in the provinces to a shared national literary culture that emanated from London, and yet that cultural traffic was not one-way. Moreover, though the literary culture transmitted through periodicals could be ephemeral and disposable, it could also exert an influence that surprisingly outlasted the moment of publication as readers preserved copies of magazines, periodical content was reprinted in different formats, and readers transcribed copies of texts into their own commonplace books.

As a labouring-class writer with restrictions on her time and disposable income, Leapor’s access to this periodical-influenced poetic culture must have been patchy, and is difficult to map comprehensively. Yet as this essay reveals, enough evidence survives to allow a partial reconstruction of her engagement with it. Periodicals such as the *Northampton Miscellany*, the *Guardian*, the *London Magazine* and the *Museum*, as well as weekly newspapers, shaped Leapor’s understanding of the literary world. This essay traces the influence these periodicals’ (often anonymous and now long-forgotten) verse had upon her developing poetic practice; explores how they offered her a connection to both a regional and

a national literary culture; and reveals how they not only provided her with a route into print but also, more surprisingly, offered her father the same. In revealing a variety of Leapor's interactions with periodicals, this essay seeks both to challenge narratives which insist on her geographical and cultural isolation, and to develop a broader understanding of the kinds of literary influence that shaped her work. At the same time this essay also offers a defence of the much maligned category of magazine and periodical verse by showing the rich possibilities it offered to contemporary readers and writers, particularly those whose access to literary material was otherwise limited.

## I.

A year before Mary Leapor was born, Northamptonshire witnessed a significant though short-lived publishing experiment: the first provincial monthly magazine. In January 1721, the entrepreneurial Northampton-based printers Robert Raikes and William Dicey began the *Northampton Miscellany or Monthly Amusements*. This literary journal was designed to complement their existing weekly newspaper the *Northampton Mercury* and – so the title page of its first issue declared – was ‘Calculated for the Diversion of the Country, and the Profit of the Printer.’<sup>8</sup> Just under half of the 44-page first issue was given over to verse of various kinds, since Raikes and Dicey viewed what they termed ‘the Poetical Part of our Monthly Collection’ to be key in attracting a diverse and loyal readership (*NM*, 2). Intended to be ‘Compounded of all kinds of Poetry’ the magazine sought to cater to differing literary tastes by promising to reprint verse from the ‘immortal Volumes’ of poets including ‘Dryden, Pope, Prior, Addison, Waller, Garth, &c.’ alongside contributions by amateur poets drawn from among the ranks of the periodical's readership (*NM*, 1-2). Raikes and Dicey vowed to ‘always leav[e] room for whatever Pieces shall be sent us by our ingenious Correspondents, within a Fortnight after the Publication of each Month, whether they be in Prose or Verse,

Geometrical Problems or Enigma's' (*NM*, 2). The initial response to the magazine seems to have been positive, but over successive issues the enthusiasm of purchasers, contributors and editors alike waned: in February the price was reduced from six- to fourpence; by April there was a dramatic tailing-off in the number of 'ingenious Correspondents' who sent in verse; and the much-vaunted diversity of literary content ultimately failed to materialize. Having overestimated their capacity to source the right mix of material to attract a readership large enough to make the *Northampton Miscellany* sustainable, after six months Raikes and Dicey ended their venture. Yet though the experiment failed, it left a significant legacy. A decade after the *Northampton Miscellany* went out of business Edward Cave established the *Gentleman's Magazine*, developing it into the nation's leading monthly periodical and effectively kick-starting the British magazine publishing industry. Cave was a long-time collaborator with Raikes and Dicey and it seems likely that his magazine was at least partly inspired by his provincial colleagues' earlier venture.<sup>9</sup> The *Northampton Miscellany* also had another important yet hitherto unrecognized impact: several of its issues, published the year before she was born, were to play a key role in the young Mary Leapor's poetic development.

When the first issue of the *Northampton Miscellany* went on sale Philip and Anne Leapor, Mary's recently married parents-to-be, were living in the Northamptonshire village of Marston St Lawrence where Philip was working as a gardener for Sir John Blencowe.<sup>10</sup> News of the new publication quickly reached them – perhaps through advertisements carried in the weekly *Northampton Mercury* – and, the evidence suggests, they were among the first readers to seek 'Amusement' and 'Diversion' in the pages of this innovative monthly publication. The magazine's poetry section attracted their attention – and if their eyes were not caught by the more literary pieces, then they certainly were by the versified 'Geometrical Problems or Enigma's' They were not alone in this: much of the early excitement about the magazine's first issues focused on the riddles, arithmetical problems and paradoxes that the

publication invited from its ‘ingenious Correspondents’ and in fact, Raikes and Dicey confessed that it was to provide a forum for the exchange of this kind of verse that ‘this Undertaking chiefly owes its Birth’ (*NM*, 2). These puzzles of various sorts explicitly encouraged reader participation. Because the form emphasized problem-solving above literary appreciation and ingenuity above literary skill, contributors who may not otherwise have had literary aspirations were inspired to read these riddling verses, submit answers, and even to compose their own. Raikes and Dicey printed the names or pseudonyms of their contributors, together with their geographical locations, meaning that puzzle-solvers and puzzle-setters from across the magazine’s catchment area were brought together on the periodical’s pages as a nascent, geographically dispersed, literary coterie.

Among the members of that select group whose ingenuity was recorded in the February issue was ‘Mr. Leapor of Marston St. Laurence in Northamptonshire’ (*NM*, 62). Philip had written in with the answer to a versified arithmetical problem by ‘W. Farrar of Hawnes’ (or Haynes) in Bedfordshire that had been printed in the magazine’s very first issue (*NM*, 19). Indeed, Philip’s ambition ran higher than simply answering other people’s questions; he was also moved to submit his own for inclusion in the February issue. Unfortunately, what this question was and whether it was in prose or verse is unclear since his and a fellow contributor’s submissions were not published, the editors apologising with a rather enigmatic explanation: ‘Mr. Palmer and Mr Leapor’s Questions would have found room here, if we could have found them’ (*NM*, 70). With this, Philip’s literary ambitions, such as they were, seem to have been thwarted and his name does not appear in any later issues. Perhaps the disappointment deterred him from any further attempts at contributing, or perhaps his enthusiasm for the magazine itself waned. The Leapors may have been among those who contributed to the magazine’s early demise by – despite their initial enthusiasm – not purchasing its later numbers.



Even though Philip's hopes of seeing his own work printed in the magazine were frustrated, this episode offers a glimpse into the household into which Mary Leapor was born which challenges received ideas about her family's engagement with literary culture. According to the short biography of the poet written by Bridget Freemantle and prefixed to the second volume of Leapor's posthumously published *Poems on Several Occasions*, Philip was dismissive of his own literary sensibilities, recounting that because he had 'no Taste for Poetry' he had not initially supported his daughter's poetic ambitions, 'not imagining it could ever be any Advantage to her' (Greene and Messenger, xl). Taking Philip's words at face value and yet noting the 'surprisingly well-formed script' that his surviving letters display, Leapor's modern biographer Richard Greene concluded that Philip must have been 'at least minimally literate'. His contributions to the *Northampton Miscellany*, however, reveal that Philip was master of more than basic literacy; he also possessed a desire to participate in local literary culture, even if only for a brief period in the year before his daughter was born.<sup>11</sup> That the Leapors were among the readers of the first issue of an avant-garde publication suggests they were actively seeking the kind of intellectual diversion that a monthly literary journal might offer; that Philip closely read and puzzled out the meaning of at least one poem before sending his answer, together with a puzzle of his own, to the Northampton printing office within the tight timeframe stipulated by the editors ('within a Fortnight after the Publication of each Month['s issue]') testifies to his keen desire to be named as part of the magazine's emergent intellectual community. The editors' reasons for declining to print his contribution are opaque, but the experience of this knockback might, potentially, have influenced his sense that poetry was something in which he had 'no Taste'; it may also have contributed to his inability to imagine that poetry 'could ever be any Advantage' to his daughter. Such speculation aside, whatever Raikes and Dicey's reasons for declining to print his contribution, and whatever Philip felt about that, the whole episode bespeaks a more complex

involvement in a locally produced literary culture than Philip was later willing to admit to, and, following his example, than subsequent critics have recognized him as having.<sup>12</sup>

## II.

If Philip was stung by the knockback, he might have remained, perhaps, proud to see his name in print, for the *Leapors* seem to have preserved the copies of the magazine that they had bought. At a young age, Mary Leapor developed a keen appetite for literary texts. The address ‘To The Reader’ that prefaced the first volume of *Poems on Several Occasions* noted that ‘Mrs. Leapor from a Child delighted in reading, and particularly Poetry, but had few Opportunities of procuring any Books of that kind’ (Greene and Messenger, xli), while, in the biography prefixed to the second volume, Bridget Freemantle recorded that Philip had told her that as a child Mary ‘was always fond of reading every thing that came in her way, as soon as she was capable of it’ (Greene and Messenger, xxxix). In a household in which books were in short supply it seems very likely that her father’s prized copies of the *Northampton Miscellany* were amongst those ‘thing[s] that came in her way’ that the young Mary eagerly read. The puzzles in prose and verse that had attracted her father may have caught her eye (the pseudonyms of several of their contributors – not only the conventional Dorinda and Strephon but also, more unusually, Sophronia Sydrophele – are echoed in her verse) but it was the magazine’s more literary inclusions that drew her sustained attention and which became part of the young poet’s literary education.<sup>13</sup>

The *Northampton Miscellany*’s literary inclusions were not, quite, the ‘immortal’ works that Raikes and Dicey had initially promised: across the magazine’s entire run Raikes and Dicey reproduced just one piece by the impressive roster of canonical talent – ‘Dryden, Pope, Prior, Addison, Waller, Garth, &c.’ – of which they had first boasted. Despite this, the early issues of the magazine featured a range of literary verse: the January issue contains two

unattributed narrative poems by William King ('Hold Fast Below' and 'The Fisherman') and an anonymous topical narrative poem, 'The South Sea Lover'; while the February issue contains an epigram 'Upon the Power of Musick' by the pseudonymous Almire, and 'Lincolnshire', an anonymous epistolary poem designed to appeal to a Northamptonshire audience through its partisan appraisal of the merits of the two counties. After two issues, however, the diversity of the magazine's literary verse began to dwindle. The March issue contains a single poem of more than thirty years vintage, Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon's 'A Poem on the Day of Judgment'; April's 'Vox Populi: or, The General Cry' was more recent but had been copied straight from an issue of the *London Journal* printed just a few days earlier;<sup>14</sup> and the May issue contains two lengthy pieces designed to fill up space, the anonymous 'The Fortunate Husbandman' and 'The Art of Husbandry', an abridgement of Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Georgics* that was concluded in the June issue. It is not clear how many issues of the magazine that the Leapors bought and kept, but the evidence of her poetry suggests that their daughter was well-acquainted with the issues for January and February at least. In particular, she was very familiar with January's 'The South Sea Lover' and February's 'Lincolnshire'. Whenever she read these pieces – perhaps as a child or teenager – they caught her attention and stayed with her, becoming part of the tissue of her own poetic expression.

The impact of the *Northampton Miscellany* on Leapor's verse can be demonstrated through a comparison of 'Lincolnshire' and Leapor's 'On Winter'. The two poems are tonally distinct: though both are epistolary addresses to friends lamenting the wintry conditions in which their authors find themselves, 'Lincolnshire' is a comic portrait of an inhospitable county while 'On Winter' seeks to find an excuse for a failure of poetic invention in the wintry weather. The landscape of 'Lincolnshire' is undoubtedly different from that in which Leapor situates her poem: with its trees, meads, and ice-capped distant mountains, her wintry

setting possesses more variety than the flat, treeless, sea-bounded, waterlogged fenland described in 'Lincolnshire'. Yet as Leapor set about writing 'On Winter,' she recalled – consciously or otherwise – the bleak, cold, and inescapably damp environment where 'Winter is the only season' (NM, 70) of which she had read in the *Northampton Miscellany*. The two poems share the same vicious winds (with the 'North and Southern Blasts' which 'unconfine'd ... blow' in 'Lincolnshire' (NM, 72) matched by the 'northern Breezes' which 'whistle thro' the Sky' (6) and 'the hollow Tempests [which] blow' (14) in Leapor's poem) and copious mud (Leapor's 'Brown...Meadows' (9), 'Seas of Mud' (22) and 'dirty Way' (24) all take their cue from the earlier poem's 'Fields are Seas', 'deep in Mud', 'miry Slough', 'swampy Land', 'Mud-banks' and 'Mud-wall[s]' (NM, 72-5)). The warning in 'Lincolnshire' that anyone tempted to venture outside 'to go thro' Mire [must] wallow thro' the Mud' (NM, 72) is echoed in Leapor's portrait of 'Afflicted Cymon [who] waddles through the Mire' (33). And just as in the bleakly cold Lincolnshire landscape 'no joyous Birds stretch here their tuneful throats' (NM, 73) so too in Leapor's wintry landscape 'no joyful Choirs hail the rising Day' (7).

Yet Leapor departs from her source in stressing an affinity between humans and animals based on their shared suffering in this challenging environment. In 'Lincolnshire', 'joyous' song is replaced by a threatening cacophony of birds who are balefully hostile to man, complete with the 'odious Cr[ies]' of 'hoarse Sea Pies' and the sounds of 'the curs'd Night Raven and the hooping Owl / [which] Disturb our Rest, and scare the guilty Soul' (NM, 73). In 'On Winter', by contrast, the absence of 'joyful' (7) song is because the wintry conditions have caused the birds to fall mute, a fate which has also befallen the poet. Just as the 'Linnet' is 'silent' (11), 'The Lark sits mournful as afraid to rise, / And the sad Finch his softer Song denies' (25-6), so too does Leapor find her poetic instinct dulled, complaining that this is no 'Time / To sport with Poesy and laugh in Rhyme' (35-6). This affinity between

man and beast is also evident in Leapor's vivid portrait – by turns sympathetic and comic – of 'Poor daggled *Urs 'la*' who

stalks from Cow to Cow,  
Who to her Sighs return a mournful Low;  
While their full Udders her broad Hands assail,  
And her sharp Nose hangs dropping o'er the Pail. (27-30)

Leapor's sketch of *Urs 'la*'s efficient milking draws on two separate moments from 'Lincolnshire'. That poem had made a cheap gibe at the resemblance between the Lincolnshire accent and the mooing of a cow:

when they would seem to speak...  
Their widen'd Mouths into a Circle grow,  
For all their Vowels are but A and O.  
The Beasts have the same Language and the Cow  
After the Owner's Voice is taught to low. (NM, 73)

In Leapor's hands, the sonic echo between woman and cow – as the cow answers *Urs 'la*'s sigh with a sympathetic-seeming response – is not cheaply comic but a moment of fellow-feeling as woman and beast jointly recognize the misery of the conditions they must endure. And yet Leapor does not sentimentalize this moment; her comic touch is just as deft – if not more so – as that of the anonymous author of 'Lincolnshire'. She takes a hint from elsewhere in that poem – that in such an inhospitable environment 'e'ery Eye with brackish Rheum o'erflows, / And a fresh Drop still hangs at ev'ry Nose' (NM, 72) – in order to complete her own vivid vignette. Ursula's dripping, dropping nose – whether the drop is of rain or snot is left ambiguous – which hangs precariously over the milk is a realistic and yet evocatively grotesque detail.

If 'Lincolnshire' provided Leapor with hints for writing about wintry landscapes and their inhabitants, provocation for writing about the commodification of romantic love came from 'The South Sea Lover', a first-person narrative voiced by Jenny, a woman abandoned

by Strephon, the lover who had hungrily pursued her until the wealth she would have brought him in marriage dissipated with the popping of the South Sea Bubble. In two poems – both written, as ‘The South Sea Lover’ was, in tetrameter couplets – Leapor took inspiration from the *Northampton Miscellany* poem to explore the unfairness of a marriage economy which meant that a woman’s fortune became the property of her husband. While the inequalities of marriage could affect women of all classes, by restaging the narrative of ‘The South Sea Lover’ Leapor focused on the experiences of wealthy women – the class of woman for which she, as a domestic servant, would have worked – who were the keenly sought-after commodities on the marriage market. Like ‘The South Sea Lover’, Leapor’s ‘The Mistaken Lover’ and ‘Strephon to Celia. A Modern Love-Letter’ both feature a fickle fortune-hunter named Strephon who is in pursuit of a rich wife. In ‘The Mistaken Lover’, Strephon’s interest is captured by the ‘Five thousand Pounds of Sterling clear’ his betrothed will bring ‘To bless the Mansion of her Dear’ (55-6), while in ‘Strephon to Celia’ Strephon admits to his would-be wife ‘I hear you have ten thousand Pound’ (30).

To make sure of this financial reward, Leapor’s Strephons follow their predecessor by performing the pattern of courtship that was supposed to convince even (and especially) where no feelings actually existed. Just as Jenny in ‘The South Sea Lover’ explains that her Strephon had ‘play’d the am’rous Swain / With so much art, that one less vain / Than me, his Vows would have believ’d, / And his Address for Love receiv’d’ (NM, 6), so too does the Strephon in ‘The Mistaken Lover’ ‘g[e]t the Lover’s Cant by rote’ (30) and, ‘at her Feet dejected lying, / Praying, weeping, sighing, dying’ (37-8), succeed in persuading Celia to marry him. In ‘Strephon to Celia,’ we witness another Strephon’s attempt at wooing, though his efforts are so inept that he mishandles even the most clichéd of compliments. A conventional attempt at praising Celia’s complexion results in his avowal that ‘Your Cheeks

that look as if they bled, / Are nothing else but Roses red' (23-4), while elsewhere in his misfiring blazon he insists:

let dull Idiots swear your Eyes  
With Love their glowing Breast inspire,  
I tell you they are Flames of Fire,  
That scorch my Forehead to a Cinder,  
And burn my very Heart to Tinder. (14-18)

Through the comic grotesquery of such hyperbole, Leapor has this Strephon condemn himself. She invites the reader to recognize his reeking insincerity, concluding the epistle with a postscript that unconvincingly denies an interest in Celia's wealth:

that I as a Trifle hold,  
Give me your Person, dem your Gold;  
Yet for your own Sake 'tis secured,  
I hope – your Houses too ensur'd,  
I'd have you take a special Care,  
And of false Mortgages beware; (31-36)

Undoubtedly a terrible lover, this Strephon does display a sound financial sensibility, perhaps having learnt from the Strephon in 'The South Sea Lover' of the risks that accompany wealth that is 'chimerically venturesome' (*NM*, 6).

Leapor's reworkings of 'The South Sea Lover' share that poem's starting point but reach different resolutions: as an epistolary poem, 'Strephon to Celia' is a single snapshot of the courtship process which, though it satirizes him, leaves the question of its Strephon's ultimate success in wooing unresolved; as a narrative poem and moral fable, 'The Mistaken Lover' traces the relationship from courtship through marriage to separation, allowing Leapor to warn against such unions by exploring what happens when a Strephon is successful in gaining possession of his wife's fortune. Yet even as she plots a different fate for Celia than that which Jenny suffered, the indignities faced by both women, married and unmarried, are remarkably similar. 'The Mistaken Lover' shares with 'The South Sea Lover' a recognition

that the institution of marriage transforms the power dynamic between man and woman.

Before financial disaster had caused the Strephon of 'The South Sea Lover' to lose interest in Jenny ('For as my Fortune felt decay, / My Beauty mouldred quite away' she laments (*NM*, 8)), she had delayed her acceptance of his marriage proposal 'Because 'twould put an end to Wooing' (*NM*, 7). Jenny invokes a quasi-proverbial wisdom to argue that 'the best Time of Woman's Life / Is when she's courted for a Wife' (*NM*, 7). Leapor's 'The Mistaken Lover' presents similarly apothegmatic sentiments:

Some tell us Wives their Beauties lose,  
When they have spoil'd their bridal Shoes:  
Some learned Casuists make it clear,  
A Wife might please for half a Year:  
And others say, her Charms will hold  
As long as the suspended Gold;  
But that her Bloom is soon decay'd,  
And wither'd when her Fortune's paid. (57-64)

As Jenny's loss of fortune had caused her beauty to moulder (at least in Strephon's eyes) so too does this gathering of accumulated opinion assert that a wife's charms wither and decay when she no longer possesses her fortune. Whether she loses her wealth through ill-fated financial speculation as Jenny does, or because it has been transferred legally to her husband as Celia's is, the consequence is the same: no longer needing to be flattered and cajoled, the woman once beloved becomes ordinary. The elaborate blazons that had been insincerely constructed to honour her are then bathetically dismantled: Jenny laments that her 'Eyes' which 'Were Diamonds, when the rotten South- / Sea Desolation was in play: / ...now as are my Cat's they're grey' (*NM*, 9), and Celia's eyes similarly 'los[e] their Fire' (79) when Strephon belatedly discovers they are 'gray. – Alack! / 'Till now I always thought 'em black' (145-6).

Yet while the magazine's Jenny finds herself powerless, unable to seek redress for Strephon's jilting of her, and doomed to be tormented by gloating gossips who triumph in her



downfall, Leapor's Celia – perhaps improbably – uses the situation and the notoriety it confers upon her to become a self-proclaimed 'Example' to warn 'gay Coquette and sprightly Beau; / That Love like theirs will never hold, / Not tho' 'tis cemented with Gold' (157-160). In other poems – influenced, as Richard Greene has noted, by Pope's observation to Martha Blount in 'An Epistle to a Lady' that 'Pelf / ...buys your sex a Tyrant o'er itself' – Leapor had worried that marriage results in domestic tyranny.<sup>15</sup> In the longer of the two 'Mira to Octavia' poems, for example, she warns Octavia against 'buy[ing] a Tyrant with the tempting Ore' because 'I fear your Shackles will be found / Too dearly purchas'd with a thousand Pound' (155-7). Yet for all his faults, the Strephon of 'The Mistaken Lover' is no domestic tyrant, and Celia is able to reassert her own power within the relationship. Even as Strephon spares no fault in itemising her physical failings (noting a 'Head extremely low' (134) while 'Shoulders stand prodigious high' (136); hair not black but 'common' brown (140); a freckled forehead; a pimply chin; and a 'Voice no Mortal can endure' (82)) Celia answers with 'a Smile' (152) and proposes terms for their separation. Their wealth means that despite their 'mutual Hatred' (167) they can afford to split amicably, each agreeing to depart separately to a 'distant Seat' (170) to live apart yet aiming to 'be civil when we meet' (178). Richard Greene has proposed that Leapor's tales of 'aristocratic marriages gone awry' may have been inspired by real-life examples she encountered – or heard gossip about – while she was in service (Greene and Messenger, xxi). Such an observation may be correct, but the poem Donna Landry has hailed as 'Leapor's most technically successful intervention against the heterosexist mythologizing of marriage among the upper classes' was also, very probably, inspired by verse that had been published in an obscure regional periodical a year before she was born.<sup>16</sup>

In the letter to John Duncombe that serves as the preface to the second volume of Leapor's *Poems on Several Occasions*, Bridget Freemantle defended her friend from a charge of plagiarism:

Since the Publication of her Poems, I hear she has been accused of stealing from other Authors; but I believe very unjustly, and imagine the Censure proceeds rather from a random Conjecture that it must be so, than any just Foundation. I don't find that the Particulars are pointed out; and if there are really any Lines in her Book that bear so near a Resemblance to what has been wrote by other Authors, as to give room for such a Conjecture, I, that was so well acquainted with her Way of Thinking, dare venture to answer for her, that it proceeded from the Impression the Reading those Passages some time before happen'd to make upon her Mind, without her remembering from whence they came. (Greene and Messenger, xxxvii)

There are some fragmentary echoes of 'Lincolnshire' and 'The South Sea Lover' in Leapor's work that might be deemed unconscious and accidental in the way that Freemantle here describes. Leapor's vivid portrait of the servant Roger in 'Crumble Hall' (who, 'His able Lungs discharg[ing] a rattling Sound', snores at the kitchen table, (134)) might have its roots in the account of an identically named labourer in 'Lincolnshire' who 'tired with [his] Toils still snore[s] and still sleep[s] on' (NM, 74). A memory of phrasing from 'The South Sea Lover' might lie behind Leapor's 'The Friend in Disgrace': just as Strephon shakes off the friend Jenny sends to confront him with a dismissive 'So Sir, your Servant, I'm in haste' (NM, 10), so too in Leapor's poem does Damon attempt to dismiss a former friend's claim on his attention with 'Sir, your Servant, and all that, Sir; / But indeed I am in haste' (13-14). Yet if these echoes were unconscious, Leapor's reworking of 'Lincolnshire' in 'On Winter' and of 'The South Sea Lover' in 'The Mistaken Lover' and 'Strephon to Celia' is more than the accidental echoing of 'Passages [read] some time before'. Leapor may not have had copies of the *Northampton Miscellany* in front of her as she wrote but the poems in the periodical had made such an 'Impression...upon her Mind' that they provided her with the forms, narrative structures, and vocabulary for her own verse.

To identify such parallels is not to diminish Leapor's achievements. As has been repeatedly reiterated in studies of Leapor's writing – typically in relation to her reading and reworking of Pope's verse – when Leapor engages with other literary texts she transforms them into something new, and that is the case here too: she takes from 'Lincolnshire' to develop an intimate, sympathetic portrait of the shared suffering of woman and beast; and she draws on 'The South Sea Lover' to warn women against falling into the trap of an unhappy marriage. What the identification of these parallels should do, though, is to alert us to the often haphazard nature of poetic influence, particularly when it comes to labouring-class writers whose access to literary texts was generally restricted. Various texts – including works by Shakespeare, Ambrose Philips, Jonathan Swift and John Gay – have been proposed as influences on Leapor's 'On Winter' and 'The Mistaken Lover' but it seems very likely that a little-read, regionally printed magazine published a year before Leapor was born was at least as influential in shaping these particular poems as these more canonical works.<sup>17</sup>

### III.

That Leapor's engagement with periodicals extended beyond her opportunistic possession of a few issues of a monthly miscellany produced before she was born seems likely, but – in the absence of more evidence – impossible to chart precisely. A range of newspapers was available to readers in the regions, including papers produced in London (such as the *St James' Evening Post*, the *London Gazette* and the *Universal Spectator*) and papers produced in the provinces (such as the *Northampton Mercury* and the *Stamford Mercury*). Several magazines were also available across the country, including Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* and its rival the *London Magazine*: by the mid-1740s these two monthly magazines were distributed to thousands of readers nationwide.<sup>18</sup> A handful of other titles including

Robert Dodsley's fortnightly *The Museum* (1746-7) also competed for readers. That at least some of these London-based newspapers and magazines reached readers in Brackley (the town to which the Leapors had moved in the 1720s) and the surrounding area is evident from the letters of Elizabeth Purefoy and her son Henry. The Purefoys lived at Shalstone, just a few miles east of Brackley, and were known to the Leapors: at various times from the 1730s to the 1750s they employed Philip Leapor as a gardener. Elizabeth Purefoy's letters suggest that she recognized the importance of the London press in circulating local news: in 1737 she advertised in the *St. James's Evening Post* for information about a servant who had absconded with strong beer from her cellar; in 1742, she complained about notices placed in the *London Evening Post* by a man she believed was in conspiracy to commit fraud by impersonating her.<sup>19</sup> Henry Purefoy, meanwhile, was an assiduous collector of monthly issues of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. His copies of the magazine were designed for long-term display as well as immediate diversion. Several of his letters from the 1730s contain instructions to his bookbinder regarding the binding and gilt-letter tooling with which he desired the volumes containing each year's collected issues to be finished.<sup>20</sup> The superior financial resources of the Purefoys, of course, means that their relationship with the periodical press would not have been the same as that enjoyed by their gardener and his daughter. Their example is useful, however, in illustrating a strong provincial connection to the London-based periodical press. Whatever newspapers or magazines came regularly or occasionally into the hands of Philip or Mary Leapor would have served to connect them, however briefly or intermittently, to a national literate and literary culture.

That this was the case is suggested in a letter Leapor wrote to Freemantle in 1746 when efforts were being made to get one of her plays performed on the London stage. Leapor comically depicted her nervous anticipation of a hostile reception:

I am like the unhappy Gentleman mentioned in the *Guardian*; and can scarce endure the bare Pronunciation of the Letter S: The hissing of the Tea-kettle distracts me; and

if I meet a Goose, I shun him as I would a Lion, or a Crocodile...I can't hear the Playhouse spoke of without trembling; and shall not dare to look into a News-paper, for fear of meeting with the Name of Cibber. (Greene and Messenger, 301)

Pre-empting criticism of her abilities by aligning herself with the character of George Spondee, a poet and playwright of limited talent whose work was hissed off the stage, Leapor alludes to – and, indeed, quotes directly from – a sketch (possibly co-written by Pope and Gay) originally printed in the popular essay-periodical the *Guardian* more than thirty years earlier.<sup>21</sup> Written by Richard Steele, Joseph Addison and others, the *Guardian* had been issued six times a week from March to October 1713, and – as was the case with its sibling-ventures the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* – its essays were subsequently repackaged in book format, meaning the periodical's promotion of politeness and urbanity reached far beyond those readers who had encountered it as a daily paper. Consequently, as Leapor stands as a hopeful would-be initiate into the professional literary community, her allusion to the *Guardian*'s George Spondee identifies her as a culturally aware individual with polite reading tastes which connect her to both a tradition of playwriting and a tradition of humorous writing about the theatre. Her allusion in the same passage to Colley Cibber, meanwhile, connects her to a more up-to-the-minute theatrical culture. As Richard Greene has proposed, it was to Cibber that Leapor's play was sent in order to secure its performance.<sup>22</sup> Too fearful to 'look into a News-paper' in case she meets 'with the Name of Cibber' – as if catching sight of his name will cause the renowned actor and theatre manager to step out of the page and cast judgement against her – Leapor reveals herself to be well-acquainted with the ways that newspapers broadcast news and gossip from London's theatres. Whether the paper she was trying to avoid is a London-printed paper sent to the provinces or a regional paper which repackaged news from the London press, the casualness of her reference suggests that such publications were a familiar occurrence in her everyday world. In different ways, then, the decades-old periodical essay and the newspaper containing the most current of news meant

that the provincial gardener's daughter could feel connected to the theatrical culture of which she wished to be a part.

Periodicals also offered Leapor a way to access and participate in contemporary poetic culture. Newspapers of all sorts – from those concerned primarily with news to those whose interests were more cultural or political – frequently gave over space to poetic contributions, but it was in magazines that poetry found a permanent home.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps taking inspiration from the *Northampton Miscellany*, when Edward Cave established the *Gentleman's Magazine* he gave over several pages to a section of 'Poetical Essays'. This proved popular, and as other magazines sprang up in imitation, they too typically included their own poetry sections. These sections were often spread over two or more pages and brought a range of verse – from puzzles and riddles composed by amateurs to literary verse by established, professional authors – into the hands of readers who might not otherwise have the money to acquire or the inclination to seek out poetry in other formats. Poetry sections in magazines were aspirational and yet accessible spaces in which, poem by poem, an amateur poet could test his or her ability and gain confidence. As the pages of the *Northampton Miscellany* had done, these poetry sections enabled the development of a literary community, allowing geographically dispersed contributors to come together within a single issue or to engage in coterie-style exchanges of verse over the course of several months. With circulations that could reach the many thousands, magazines provided poets with exposure to a diverse and extensive readership, enabling them to build their public profiles. They also offered provincial writers the possibility of developing relationships with London-based printers and booksellers with whom they might work on more substantial publishing projects. Submitting one's verse to a periodical became a step regularly taken by aspiring writers: in the 1730s, the young Mark Akenside and Elizabeth Carter, and the older yet still provincial Samuel Johnson, each viewed the poetry section of the *Gentleman's Magazine* as a platform

from which a literary career might be launched.<sup>24</sup> In 1746 as, together with her patrons and friends, Leapor was developing plans to publish a volume of her verse and get her play staged, someone suggested to her that she might usefully supplement these endeavours by sending her verse to a magazine. Yet despite the possibilities periodical publication offered to an ambitious, young provincial poet, Leapor seems to have had some anxieties about it.

Leapor's ambivalence about publishing in periodicals is expressed in 'The Proposal', an address to the 'Friend' (almost certainly Bridget Freemantle) who has recommended this course of action to her. She displaces her doubts about periodical publication onto her Muse, a 'squinting' 'peevish Maid' (11) who enters into an argument with Mira, Leapor's poetic persona. Leapor depicts the Muse as an unseen eavesdropper on discussions she and her friend have had; after these discussions have concluded, the Muse accosts Mira with a one-sided harangue:

shall I see the cripl'd Crew  
Discarded from their Seat and you,  
Turn'd out to skip from hand to hand  
In dirty Gazettes round the Land,  
To grace the Knee of ev'ry Sot,  
And catch the droppings of his Pot,  
While in a rage the drowsy Swains  
Perhaps may curse you for your Pains,  
Protesting with a Critick's Spite,  
That none since *Durfey* knew to write? (17-26)

The trope of poem as beloved-but-slightly-malformed offspring – with 'cripl'd' punning on defective poetic feet – is one that recurs one in Leapor's writing, but its invocation here may owe something to the scorn directed towards 'Journals, Medleys, Merc'ries, Magazines' in Pope's *Dunciad*.<sup>25</sup> The Muse's accusation that publishing in periodicals is equivalent to discarding one's children echoes the *Dunciad*'s insistence that magazines are a home for 'new-born nonsense' and 'dead-born Dulness' 'thrown out weekly and monthly by every miserable scribler'.<sup>26</sup> The readers of the periodicals that the Muse imagines aren't

gentlemanly collectors like Henry Purefoy who bind pristine issues into beautifully decorated volumes that are destined for well-appointed libraries, or even poetically inclined gardener's daughters hungry for whatever literary nourishment they can find: they are sots who carelessly give periodicals scant and fleeting consideration before disposing of them. Even those readers who do give more than a glance at the verse contained in these publications, the Muse warns, lack any real discrimination, since the literary tastes of these dull-witted would-be critics find merit in the popular songs of Thomas D'Urfey.

Rather than bringing her the recognition that she craves, the Muse fears that printing her work in periodicals will only bring her scorn, so if Mira is set on publishing in periodicals, the Muse makes her an offer:

if you want a Muse,  
To grace the Page of weekly News,  
The Task is much too low for me,  
Yet I've a Maid of less Degree,  
(With Spirit suiting to her State)  
Will serve you at an easy Rate:  
Whose Voice, tho' hoarse, is loud and strong,  
An Artist at a ranting Song,  
Can chaunt Lampoons without much straining,  
Or Epigrams with double Meaning,  
To join the Tavern-Harp or Viol: (27-37)

To appeal to the audience that finds diversion in periodicals, the Muse argues, Leapor will have to adjust her literary ambitions and write a different kind of verse. The verse that finds favour in these publications – songs, lampoons and smutty epigrams (and, though unmentioned in this poem, the sort of clunky riddle and versified arithmetical conundrum that appeals to provincial gardeners like her father) – is not the kind of verse that she has written to date. The bad-tempered, quarrelsome Muse maligns and misrepresents periodical verse and its readership but underneath the exaggeration for comic effect is a real anxiety that periodical publication needed to be managed carefully if it was to be used to develop the kind of literary career to which Leapor aspired.



At the end of 'The Proposal', Leapor turns to Freemantle for advice on how to proceed. The pair seem to have decided to develop a publishing strategy that involved pitching her work at those titles that reached a more literate and literary audience than that of the 'dirty Gazettes' and 'weekly News' of the Muse's nightmarish vision. Leapor's first appearance in print came in the January 1747 issue of the well-regarded and widely distributed *London Magazine*, with 'The Rural Maid's Reflexions, Written by a Gardener's Daughter. Inscribed to a Lady'.<sup>27</sup> The title reflected the poem's preoccupation with introducing its author to the world as a provincial, labouring-class poet. Leapor would confess to doubts about presenting her work through this prism: citing the example of Stephen Duck, the 'thresher poet' whose verse had won him the patronage of Queen Caroline, she argued

that it was not his Situation, but the Royal Favour, which gained the Country over to his Side; and therefore I think it needless to paint the Life of a Person, who depends more upon the Curiosity of the World, than its Good-nature. Besides, the seeing myself described in Print would give me the same Uneasiness as being stared at. For this Reason, whenever my Verses shall appear amongst the Public, I hope they will excuse the Author in this Particular. (Greene and Messenger, 302)

Nevertheless, in 'The Rural Maid's Reflexions' Leapor made much of her own 'Situation'. Written in August 1746, the poem may have been influenced by a reading of Duck's work, particularly of 'To a Gentleman, who requested a Copy of Verses from the Author', the piece which opened Duck's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1736).<sup>28</sup> Like Duck's poem, 'The Rural Maid's Reflexions' was an autobiographical epistle that used an address to a particular individual to introduce the poet to the world at large. Leapor followed Duck in launching her literary career by presenting herself as a talented individual whose literary opportunities had been restricted by the gaps in her education and the demands of a working life. Choosing a simile that chimed with his occupational background, Duck had compared his untutored mind to 'a Plat of Ground, / Waste and uncultivated, void of Seeds, / Producing nothing, but some

trifling Weeds.’<sup>29</sup> The gardener’s daughter matched the agricultural labourer in manipulating this metaphor, contrasting her fate as one who must spend hours in ‘laborious toil... / Employ’d to cultivate the springing flowers’ to that of more ‘happy’ individuals who ‘with leisure find / With care like this, to cultivate their mind.’<sup>30</sup> By depicting herself (in a conscious echo of Milton’s description of Shakespeare as ‘warbl[ing] his native woodnotes wild’) as a ‘rural maid’ who like a ‘poor bird... warbles forth his native, untaught note’ Leapor crafted a self-portrait of a piously deferential natural genius which William Christmas has described as a ‘manipulation of the cultural norms that govern[ed] the appearance of plebeian poetic genius at mid-century’.<sup>31</sup> Though Leapor had reservations about framing her work through her biography, her patrons considered it to be a useful strategy for developing her public profile, and hence promoting the subscription campaign to publish her verse. That ‘The Rural Maid’s Reflexions’ was Leapor’s first appearance in print suggests she may have conceded this point; that, as William Christmas has rightly noted, there is something tonally suspect, satiric even, in Leapor’s ‘manipulation’ of these ‘cultural norms’ – particularly when this poem is considered alongside more spirited and unruly self-portraits such as ‘Mira’s Picture’ – suggests this concession was not absolute.<sup>32</sup>

While this first appearance in print seems to have been designed to exploit the opportunities that periodicals presented for self-promotion, her second, hitherto unnoticed, appearance in print – just a few weeks later, with ‘Sylvia and the Bee’ in *The Museum* on 14 February 1747 – took advantage of some of the other possibilities periodicals offered.<sup>33</sup> Edited by Mark Akenside and published by Robert Dodsley, *The Museum* aspired to support the ‘Advancement of polite Literature’ and invited correspondents to contribute so that the periodical might ‘become a general Vehicle by which the Literati of the whole Kingdom may converse with each other’.<sup>34</sup> *The Museum* reached a smaller audience than did the *London Magazine* but it contained original contributions from writers including Isaac Hawkins

Browne, William Collins, Stephen Duck, David Garrick, John Lord Hervey, Samuel Johnson, Christopher Smart, Joseph Spence, Horace Walpole, the Wartons (Thomas Sr, Thomas Jr, and Joseph) and William Whitehead.<sup>35</sup> A witty reflection on a beautiful woman who has thoughtlessly killed a bee (and perhaps influenced by John Gay's 'The Lady and the Wasp'), 'Sylvia and the Bee' was an early variant of a poem that would later be published in the first volume of Leapor's *Poems on Several Occasions*.<sup>36</sup> With its garden setting, Anne Milne has proposed that this poem's 'attention to local detail in her list of flowers – roses, lilies, tulips, and pinks – is literally grounded in [Leapor's] experience of working with her father in his nursery business in Brackley'.<sup>37</sup> Yet the speaker of 'Sylvia and the Bee' does not identify herself, as the speaker of 'The Rural Maid's Reflexions' had done, as a gardener's daughter. Indeed, the speaker of 'Sylvia and the Bee' is not obviously gendered female. With its extensive focus on the charms of Sylvia, Richard Greene has suggested that the poem 'could be read for an underlying lesbian attraction' but, appearing in *The Museum* (like many other works in that periodical) without an attribution of any kind, the poem's earliest readers would have assumed that it was voiced by a heterosexual male.<sup>38</sup> There was nothing in this poem's first appearance to identify its author as a woman, or as a labouring class poet, or in fact as a writer in any way different to the regular contributors to *The Museum*. Rather than swaying readerly opinion by dwelling on the author's education, class, or gender, *The Museum* enabled Leapor to appear on equal terms with writers James Tierney has described as 'the most fashionable authors of the age'.<sup>39</sup> This anonymity prevented Leapor from receiving credit for her work but it may have appealed to her, allowing her to participate in elite literary culture without that uneasy feeling of 'being stared at'. Thus, while submitting 'The Rural Maid's Reflexions' to the *London Magazine* offered Leapor the possibility of developing a reputation as a labouring-class poet among a very broad readership, submitting 'Sylvia and the Bee' to *The Museum* was an attempt to become part of a select group of 'Literati', and,

perhaps also to develop a relationship with one of the period's most influential literary publishers, Robert Dodsley.

The appearance of these two poems in periodicals in early 1747 should have launched Mary Leapor's literary career. Tragically, however, in the autumn of 1746 – not long after these poems must have been sent off to London – she fell ill with measles. On 12 November 1746, she died at the age of just twenty-four.<sup>40</sup> Leapor never saw her verse reach print, and we will never know how publication in periodicals might have affected her development as a poet. With the prefatory matter of both volumes of her posthumously published *Poems on Several Occasions* framing her as an isolated yet exceptional individual who chiefly found diversion in the works of Alexander Pope, and with 'The Proposal' indicating a disdain for periodical publication, Leapor's embeddedness within a periodical-based poetic culture has long been occluded. Yet periodicals were vital in Leapor's emergence as a poet, providing access to, and a means to participate in, both a locally and a nationally produced literary culture. Even as her Muse turned her nose up at the prospect of 'grac[ing] the page of weekly News', Leapor's engagement with periodicals was attentive yet sceptical, attuned to the possibilities these publications afforded and yet aware of their potential pitfalls. What was true for Leapor must also have held, to a greater or lesser extent, for many other provincial and labouring-class readers and writers too. For these individuals, as for Leapor, poetry in magazines would have been much more than 'trite or sentimental 'filler' worth no one's time': it was an important lifeline that offered a vital connection to a wide-ranging and vibrant poetic culture that could have transformative effects on their reading and writing lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Greene, *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry* (Oxford, 1993), 24.

<sup>2</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 4; Valerie Rumbold, 'The Alienated Insider: Mary Leapor in 'Crumble Hall'', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 19 (1996), 63; Susan Goulding, 'Reading "Mira's Will": The Death of Mary Leapor and the Life of the Persona', *Modern Language Studies*, 32 (2002), 73; Anne Milne, 'The Place of the Poet in Place: Reading Local Culture in the Work of Mary Leapor', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 34 (2015), 128. See also Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge, 1996), 192-3. For a contrary view see Betty Rizzo, who insists 'Brackley was neither cut off from the world nor dull' in 'Molly Leapor: An Anxiety for Influence', *Age of Johnson* 4 (1991), 319.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Greene and Ann Messenger (eds), *The Works of Mary Leapor* (Oxford, 2003), xl. Unless otherwise stated, all references to Leapor's poems and their prefatory matter are to this edition, and will be given parenthetically in the text by line number in the former case, and by page number in the latter. Greene describes the contents of the Weston Hall library, which may have been available to Leapor, in *Mary Leapor*, 210-3.

<sup>4</sup> Rizzo, 'Molly Leapor', 332. Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge, 1990), 51, 81-2, 88, 92-4, 102, 110-2; Claudia N. Thomas, *Alexander Pope and his Eighteenth-Century Women Readers* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1994), 152-9, 199-204, 232-4; Caryn Chaden, 'Mentored from the Page: Mary Leapor's Relationship with Alexander Pope' in Donald Mell (ed.), *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers* (Newark and London, 1996), 31-47; Margaret Anne Doody, 'Swift among the Women', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 18 (1988), 79-80; Anne Chandler, 'Monarchy, Meritocracy, and Tragic Realism in the Work of Mary Leapor', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 34 (2015), 125-139.

<sup>5</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 165-85.

<sup>6</sup> Kathryn R. King, 'Jane Barker, Mary Leapor, and a Chain of Very Odd Contingencies', *English Language Notes*, 33 (1996), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Linda R. Hughes, 'What the Wellesley Index Left Out: Why Poetry Matters to Periodical Studies', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40 (2007), 91.

<sup>8</sup> *Northampton Miscellany* (January 1721), title page. Subsequent references to the *Northampton Miscellany* (NM) will be given parenthetically in the text.

<sup>9</sup> Carl L. Carlson, *The First Magazine: A History of the Gentleman's Magazine* (Providence, R. I., 1938), 9-11, 25. Anthony Barker notes that Raikes and Dicey were listed among the *Gentleman's Magazine's* early regional

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distributors, 'Poetry from the Provinces: Amateur Poets in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in the 1730s and 1740s in Alvaro Ribeiro and James G. Basker (eds), *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts, and the Eighteenth-Century Canon* (Oxford, 1996), 243.

<sup>10</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Philip's appearance in the subscription list of local vicar Thomas Bowles's *Aristarchus: or a Compendious and Rational Institution of the Latin Tongue* (Oxford, 1748), 272, similarly suggests an involvement in local literary culture in the years following his daughter's death.

<sup>13</sup> *Northampton Miscellany* (January 1721), 13; (February 1721), 62-3; See, for example, Leapor's 'Dorinda at her Glass', 'Damon and Strephon', 'Mopsus, or the Castle Builder' (392), and 'Advice to Sophronia'.

<sup>14</sup> *London Journal*, 29 April 1721.

<sup>15</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 76.

<sup>16</sup> Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge, 1990), 89.

<sup>17</sup> On Philips, see Edmund Blunden, 'A Northamptonshire Poetess: Mary Leapor', *Journal of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society*, 28 (1936), 65 and on Philips and Shakespeare see Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 127-8. On Swift, see Doody, 'Swift among the Women', 79-80; Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, 89; and Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 55-8. On Gay, see Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 179.

<sup>18</sup> On the edition sizes of both magazines see D. F. McKenzie and J. C. Ross (eds), *A Ledger of Charles Ackers, Printer of the London Magazine* (Oxford, 1968), 11-2. For the distribution of both magazines across the Midlands, see Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2006), 214.

<sup>19</sup> *Purefoy Letters 1735-1753*, ed. G. Eland, 2 vols (London, 1931), 1: 131, 2: 257.

<sup>20</sup> *Purefoy Letters*, 2: 274-5.

<sup>21</sup> No. 11, 24 March 1713 in *The Guardian*, ed. John Calhoun Stephens (Lexington, 1982), 74, 615.

<sup>22</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 21.

<sup>23</sup> R. M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices: Early Provincial Newspapers in England* (Columbus, 1965), 306-20; Carlson, *First Magazine*, 197-238; Barker, 'Amateur Poets'; Jennifer Batt, 'Poems in Magazines' in Jack Lynch ed., *Oxford Handbook of British Poetry 1660-1800* (Oxford, forthcoming).

<sup>24</sup> Barker 'Amateur Poets', 246, 251, 253-4.

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<sup>25</sup> For her use of the trope elsewhere, see e.g. ‘The Muses Embassy’, ‘To a Gentleman with a Manuscript Play’ and ‘Upon her Play being returned to her, stained with Claret’.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad in Four Books*, revd. edn, ed. Valerie Rumbold (London, 2009), I: 42 and note.

For Leapor as a reader of the *Dunciad* see Greene and Messenger, 300.

<sup>27</sup> *London Magazine*, 16 (January 1747), 45.

<sup>28</sup> Leapor’s poem would be printed her second volume of *Poems on Several Occasions* as ‘To Lucinda. [August, 1746]’.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Duck, ‘To a Gentleman, who requested a Copy of Verses from the Author’ in *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1736), 4. The poem had previously been published in an unauthorised edition of Duck’s works, *Poems on Several Subjects*, in 1730.

<sup>30</sup> *London Magazine*, 16 (January 1747), 45.

<sup>31</sup> *London Magazine*, 16 (January 1747), 45. William J. Christmas, *The Lab’ring Muses: Work, Writing and the Social Order in English Plebeian Poetry, 1730-1830* (Newark, 2001), 164.

<sup>32</sup> Christmas, *Lab’ring Muses*, 164.

<sup>33</sup> *The Museum* (14 February 1747), 357-8.

<sup>34</sup> *The Museum* (London 1746), Preface, a<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> James E. Tierney, ‘*The Museum*, the “Super-Excellent Magazine”’, *Studies in English Literature*, 13 (1973), 507-9.

<sup>36</sup> It appears in Leapor, *Poems*, 1: 270-3 as ‘Silvia and the Bee’. The sequencing can be deduced from several features: the version in *Poems* is 12 lines longer than that in the *Museum*; features two extra characters (Cynthio and Amintor); and has a more consistently regular rhyme-scheme. This suggests that the *Poems* version is the later expanded and revised text.

<sup>37</sup> Milne, ‘The Place of the Poet’, 134.

<sup>38</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 82.

<sup>39</sup> Tierney, ‘*The Museum*’, 507.

<sup>40</sup> Greene, *Mary Leapor*, 22.